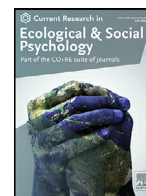




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Why do many parents expect more help from their children during COVID-19? A qualitative follow-up to quantitative survey data

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ABSTRACT

Quantitative analysis in this special issue (Greenfield, Brown, & Du, 2021) showed that the COVID-19 pandemic has led most parents to report greater expectations for their children to help with family subsistence. This familistic development exemplifies the shifts in behavior and values predicted by Greenfield's Theory of Social Change, Cultural Evolution, and Human Development when survival concerns rise and the social world retracts. Here, we use qualitative analysis to uncover the psychological processes behind the quantitative shift. Our California sample consisted of 109 parents with at least one child between age 7 and 18 living at home during the pandemic when they answered the survey. Forty-six of these parents provided qualitative data concerning expectations for their children's household responsibilities during COVID-19. An open-ended question asked parents to explain why their expectations of their children to help around the house and to carry out self-maintenance had changed or remained the same. Prominent themes in the qualitative responses manifest a shift from a mindset found in a large-scale urban society toward that found in a small-scale subsistence community: Before the pandemic, parents focused on schoolwork and extracurricular activities, but that transitioned into a focus on household duties such as cooking and cleaning. In some cases, this shift was linked to an increase in life satisfaction; in other cases, it was linked to a decline in life satisfaction.

1. Introduction

Greenfield's Theory of Social Change, Cultural Evolution, and Human Development (Greenfield, 2009, 2016, 2018) predicted, and survey results confirmed, that when survival concerns became more prevalent and the social world narrowed during COVID-19 stay-at-home orders, society's values, activities, relationships, and parenting expectations shifted from individualism toward family-centered collectivism. The survey was first carried out in California and results were replicated in Rhode Island (Greenfield et al., 2021).

In the survey, augmented survival concerns were indexed a month after the beginning of stay-at-home orders in each state by the frequency with which respondents reported that, compared with before the coronavirus, they were thinking more about their own mortality, the mortality of their family members, making concrete plans for when they die (ex. making a will or trust, where they would like to be buried or cremated), and about whether their family members had made concrete plans for when they die. On average, we found that respondents from both states reported thinking significantly more about these four items one month into the pandemic than before (Greenfield et al., 2021).

Most relevant to the present article, parents' expectations for their children to help at home by contributing to self-maintenance and, especially, family maintenance increased during the pandemic. These increased expectations occurred in the areas of meal preparation, cleaning the house, and laundry (Greenfield et al., 2021). The current qualitative study intensively analyzes how and why this parenting shift took place.

Cross-cultural analysis by Rogoff et al. (1975) and Weisner (1996) identifies age seven as the time when children are fully capable of helping with household chores and are expected to do so in many cultures. Based on this analysis, our parent subsample consisted of parents with at least one child between age 7 and 18 living at home. Our goal in the quantitative study (Greenfield et al., 2021) was to see how parental expectations of children who were capable of helping at home had shifted. It was not to delineate the age progression in child expectations. The cutoff age of 18 was based on the fact that many children in the United States are away at college or are living in their own apartments by that age. Our goal in the present qualitative study is to uncover the cultural and psychological processes behind the quantitative shift in parental expectations during the pandemic.

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2. Method

2.1. Design

Qualitative data regarding parental expectations were extracted from the survey conducted by Greenfield et al. (2021). Descriptive quantitative data provides context for the qualitative analysis. Our study focused on California rather than the replication state of Rhode Island for two reasons:

1. The change in parent expectations and all other shifts during COVID that were identified in California were replicated in Rhode Island (Greenfield et al., 2021).
2. The qualitative points made by parents in California and Rhode Island were similar; hence Rhode Island provided “saturation,” the point where data starts to repeat itself and no new phenomena appear (Saunders et al., 2018).

2.2. Participants: identifying the qualitative sample

A sample of 1137 California residents was surveyed around one month after the beginning of stay-at-home orders (Greenfield et al., 2021). Within this sample, there were 109 California parents with at least one child between ages 7 and 18 living at home.

In this parent subsample, the ages of the parents ranged from 30 to 68 years old with a mean of 48.1 ($SD = 8.63$). Eighty-eight were mothers (80.7%); 19 were fathers (17.4%); 2 were parents of indeterminate gender (1.8%). Of the 63 parents who reported their highest level of education, 6.4% answered high school, 22.2% responded community college, 27.0% said 4-year college, and 44.4% had attended graduate school. Excluding two participants who did not answer, ethnically, the sample was 77.6% European American, 2.8% Latinx, 0.9% African American, 4.7% Asian American, 2.8% Native American, and 11.2% “other.” We note that the present study is not representative of California’s demography as Latinx, African American, and Asian Americans are underrepresented while European American and Native Americans are overrepresented in our sample (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). In addition, we recognize that the educational demography is not representative of California. Only 34.7% of Californians over age 25 have an education higher than a bachelor’s degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). This figure differs from our sample in which about 71.4% have an education higher than a bachelor’s degree.

Of this subsample of 109 California parents who were part of Greenfield et al. (2021)’s quantitative analysis, 73 parents responded to the main open-ended question that generated our qualitative data. The question was: *If you answered that your expectations of your children to help around the house and/or your involvement in their schooling has changed, please explain how.* Since the focus of the present analysis is helping around the house rather than parental involvement in schooling, we focused on parents who responded to the qualitative question by addressing the topic of helping around the house.

Working independently, the first three authors coded the entire database for themes and whether a response was relevant to the topic at hand – parental expectations concerning help with household subsistence tasks. To be included, the participant’s rationale had to be consistent with the participant’s net change score. Twenty-eight responses were filtered out of the analysis due to their inconsistent or irrelevant nature. This left 45 qualitative responses that helped explain the rationale behind parents’ expectations of children helping at home. Neither of the two parents with decreased expectations for their children during COVID-19 provided explanations.

Whereas mothers comprised 80.7% of the larger parent subsample used for the quantitative report (Greenfield et al., 2021), 91.1% of our qualitative sample were mothers. Hence mothers were even more overrepresented in our qualitative analysis than in the quantitative report of changes in parental expectations.

Ethnically, the qualitative subsample closely mirrored the total parent subsample in the quantitative report (Greenfield et al., 2021): 77.6% of the larger quantitative sample of California parents was European American in ethnicity; our qualitative subsample was 75.0% European American, 2.3% was Latinx, 2.3% was African American, 6.8% was Asian American, 2.3% was Native American, 11.4% identified as other.

Note that our parent subsample consists of one parent in each family reporting on the composition of their household; hence our unit of analysis is the family household, not individual members.

2.3. Analysis

The set of 45 responses was used to analyze why the dominant response for parents in the quantitative study was increasing expectations for household help from children (Greenfield et al., 2021) and to learn why some parents’ expectations had not changed. (Note that the wording of the open-ended question focused on change, so unchanging expectations are undoubtedly underrepresented in the data, albeit still interesting from a qualitative perspective.)

The qualitative responses were separated into two groups according to whether the parent expressed their expectations of help from their child or children had increased or stayed the same during COVID stay-at-home in response to the three quantitative Likert-scale items. We assessed this directionality by asking whether, since the stay-at-home order, parents had greater, less, or no change in expectations for their children to help with various household tasks: cooking for the family, cleaning common areas of the family home, and doing the family laundry. Similar questions assessed whether parents had greater, less, or no change in expectations for their children to help with their own self-maintenance: preparing their own meals, keeping their own rooms clean, and doing their own laundry. From these questions, net change scores (increase, decrease, no change) were calculated in the domains of family tasks and self-maintenance tasks. (Details of how net change scores were calculated are found in Greenfield et al., 2021, this special issue).

In the qualitative sample, 42 parents had increased expectations of their children helping with family maintenance tasks. Thirty-two of the 42 also increased their expectations for their children’s self-maintenance; the other 10 reported no net change in expectations for child self-maintenance. Three parents reported no change in expectations for children helping either with family subsistence tasks or child self-maintenance. In sum, 42 out of the 45 parents provided a rationale for increased expectations of their children at home; 3 provided a rationale for unchanged expectations.

In order to analyze the affective concomitants of parenting changes, we utilized another quantitative survey question and a qualitative follow-up concerning satisfaction with life. The quantitative rating item was: *Compared with before coronavirus, my life since the stay-at-home order is more satisfying, less satisfying, or equally satisfying.* The open-ended qualitative follow-up question was: *If you find that your satisfaction with life has changed since the stay-at-home order can you please explain why.*

2.3.1. Thematic analysis

For the thematic analysis, the lead author first inductively identified basic themes after reading all of the relevant qualitative responses. Subsequently, the other two authors also read all 45 responses and coding categories were added. Final coding was based on a consensus process; where there was initial disagreement, discussion ensued until consensus was reached.

The 16 themes identified for increased expectations were:

- (1) Children have more time at home.
- (2) Parents have more time at home with their children to teach life (subsistence) skills.
- (3) Parents want or need more help with household chores because, in addition to working, they are now also doing homeschooling and/or childcare.

- (4) Parent experiences less guilt for taking their children away from schoolwork.
- (5) The child helps their family.
- (6) Children are learning new skills.
- (7) Children’s prior responsibilities are extended.
- (8) Parents are encouraging their children to be more helpful.
- (9) Cooperation
- (10) Parents want their children to be more independent. If children are better able to care for themselves, parents have fewer responsibilities.
- (11) Parents and their children are experiencing a difficult transition in adapting to stay-at-home orders.
- (12) Child wants to be more independent.
- (13) Helping around the house has become an obligation rather than a choice.
- (14) COVID rationale. Good hygiene as a preventative measure.
- (15) Parent teaches child subsistence skills.
- (16) Increased expectations are simply the new normal as a consequence of adapting to the pandemic.

Three themes were identified for unchanging expectations:

- (1) Children already met high expectations before the pandemic.
- (2) Children were homeschooled before the pandemic and therefore were already doing chores at home.
- (3) Parents are trying to maintain normalcy.

In the Results section, we present coded responses of all parents who contributed qualitative data on the topic at hand – in support of increased expectations for children’s subsistence contributions (Table 1) or stable expectations (Table 2); in these tables, participants are the unit of analysis. Note that the presentation of all data in Tables 1 and 2 without data reduction enables readers to evaluate coding for themselves and/or to make their own interpretations, rendering unnecessary the usual process of reliability coding when data have been reduced to numbers, making original data invisible.

After presenting data in tabular form, we tally the frequency of each theme – themes in support of increased expectations (Fig. 1) and themes in support of unchanged expectations (Fig. 2); In these figures, theme rather than participant is the unit of analysis. Since responses frequently combine different themes, the theme sample size is larger than the number of participants contributing data.

3. Results

As hypothesized, many parents expected their children to contribute more to household duties, a familistic value intrinsic to subsistence village ecologies (Greenfield et al., 2021; Lancy, 2012). For quantitative results, out of 109 parents, 67 participants reported having increased expectations, 39 reported no change in expectations, and 3 participants reported having decreased expectations. There were also increased expectations for children’s self-maintenance, but this trend was less pronounced: 55 parents reported increased expectations; 51 reported no change, and 3 reported a decrease in expectations. 42 parents provided reasons for increasing expectations concerning their children’s contributions to family maintenance or self-maintenance during the pandemic in the domains of cooking, cleaning, and laundry. Three parents provided reasons for no change in parental expectations in these domains. No parent provided a reason for reducing their expectations in these same domains. Hence, in the qualitative subsample, 93% of the respondents provided a rationale for increasing their expectations of children’s contributions to household maintenance.

3.1. Increased expectations: themes and their frequency

Table 1 presents all 42 qualitative responses and the theme or combination of themes that parents expressed in support of increasing expectations concerning their children’s contributions to family maintenance or self-maintenance in regards to cooking, cleaning, and laundry during the pandemic. Responses in Table 1 are grouped according to the theme or combination of themes expressed by individual parents.

Table 1
Parents’ Reasons for Increased Expectations Concerning Children’s Contributions to Family Maintenance or Self Maintenance During the Pandemic.

Parent Ethnicity Education	ID	Age of Child(ren)	Response
Children have more time.			
Father Other —	ahE	7, 10, 14	<i>They are home 24/7. Ergo, more involvement.</i>
Mother Euro. Am. —	w3P	17	<i>.... he has had more time to help with home things...</i>
Mother Euro. Am. Community college	3NL	10, 17, 23, 25	<i>They have more time to help....</i>
Mother Asian Am. Community college	6IO	15, 19, 21	<i>My two older sons have been furloughed from work. Since they are home much more now, they are doing more tasks. (Note that while this family has a 15-year-old living at home, this mother is referring to her 19- and 21-yearold sons.)</i>
Mother Euro. Am. Post-graduate	FXA	3, 8	<i>They have more time at home and can do more to help out - it increases their confidence and sense of control also.</i>
Father African Am. 4-year college	oJb	9, 16, 17	<i>We spend more time at home so all tasks are to be shared more than when we kept busier schedules</i>
Mother LatinX Post-graduate	6Ap	12, 16	<i>My children are expected to help around the house as their school load has decreased. They have more time to contribute to the household chores.</i>

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Table 1 (continued)

Parent Ethnicity Education	ID	Age of Child(ren)	Response
<p>Children have more time. Parents want or need more help. Parents have more time to teach children subsistence skills. Children learn new skills.</p>			
Mother Euro. Am. Community college	ZTd	6, 11	<i>Because there is more workload in regards to cooking, and we all at home anyway, and they needs breaks from electronics, and they have more time to fill their days, and school is at home and household duties are an element missing from their education but very practical, and it's nice to take advantage from the daily grind to pick up a new skill, and mostly because I have more time to enforce rules. We are no longer running around ragged, trying to keep up with life; now we have time to do it right.</i>
<p>Children have more time. Parents want or need more help. Obligation rather than choice to help.</p>			
Mother Native Am. —	GPf	10, 13	<i>They are making more "messes" around the house since they are home more often (all day every day) so they are required to clean up after themselves.</i>
<p>Children have more time. Parents want or need more help. Parents have more time to teach children subsistence skills. Difficult transition.</p>			
Mother Euro. Am. —	VJV	16	<i>Organically it has changed because now that she is home there seems to be more mess, more cooking, more laundry so over time she just started to do her own laundry (probably because I casually stopped doing hers ha ha ha). Her room is now clean (her doing) because I asked her to do her school work and she procrastinated by cleaning her room. I think her bedroom is cleaner because she now actually spends time in there whereas before it was just a room to go to sleep in at night (she was very busy before shutdown). For Passover she made the yummy dark chocolate dessert and sort of let me teach her (she doesn't cook). In general my expectations have increased because now that she is home she has more time to come tribute [contribute]to helping with the housekeeping however it's still a fight most times ha ha ha.</i>
<p>Children have more time. Parents have more time to teach children subsistence skills. Child helps family.</p>			
Mother Euro. Am. Post-graduate	1a5	12, 13, 18	<i>The children are helping to cook and clean. I have been teaching them basic survival skills since we now have the time, whereas before, they were too busy to help</i>
<p>Children have more time. Parents have more time to teach children subsistence skills. Children learn new skills.</p>			
Mother Euro. Am. Post-graduate	9sn	14, 16	<i>My kids are the perfect ages for developing solid cooking and cleaning skills. Before quarantine they were so busy with extra-curricular activities that there was hardly any time to cook or clean with them and I could only do that with them during vacations from school. Now we have more time and they are doing more.</i>
<p>Children have more time. Parents want or need more help.</p>			
Mother Asian Am. —	Set	13	<i>I have asked my daughter to help more with keeping the living room tidy and helping more with kitchen clean up. Since we are home more there is more to do and there is not as much time pressure on her with school, so I feel she can be more available for these things.</i>
Father Other Post-graduate	Yyq	5, 12, 14	<i>Both to help my spouse who stays at home, and also to keep them from getting bored, they are now expected to do a little more around the house.</i>
Mother Euro. Am. 4-year college	v5O	9, 11	<i>They are home more, and making more of a mess, so there's more to clean.</i>
Mother Euro. Am. 4-year college	AlQ	15, 15	<i>Since they are home more and destroying the home more, I do expect more help. Since they are more in control of their school time, I take the moments that they are up from their desks to ask them to do something that helps the household in between times.</i>
<p>Parents want or need more help. Child helps family.</p>			
Mother Asian Am. Post-graduate	9hD	17	<i>My husband and I are still working (both physicians) so our daughter makes some dinners for us</i>

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Table 1 (continued)

Parent Ethnicity Education	ID	Age of Child(ren)	Response
Children have more time. Parents want or need more help. Obligation rather than choice to help.			
Mother Other —	Tjl	5, 10	<i>We simply need more help and they are around more. So they must help!</i>
Children have more time. Parent teaches child subsistence skills.			
Mother Euro. Am. Community College	fUi	10, 12, 15	<i>.... I have also been teaching more life skills now that they are home all day.</i>
Children have more time. Parent experiences less guilt.			
Mother Euro. Am. —	yZQ	13, 15	<i>Since they have more time on their hands, I don't feel guilty asking them to do more around the house (Cooking and cleaning) Normally I would be expecting them to do homework..., but they are finishing their school work within the normal hours of the school day (at home).</i>
Children have more time. Child helps family. Parents want their children to be more independent.			
Mother Euro. Am. Community college	gVP	12	<i>Doing well in school was a high expectation of my child before the stay at home order. So when she would get home after homework my focus was on fun and relaxation. Now that she has less schoolwork and responsibility, I have given her more responsibilities around the house. She cooks one whole dinner a week finding the recipe, making a list etc. she also makes her breakfast and lunch a few times a week</i>
Parents have more time to teach children subsistence skills.			
Mother Euro. Am. Post-graduate	NsV	3, 10	<i>I am a full time working mom, but I now have more time at home to teach them to cook and bake.</i>
Parent teaches child subsistence skills.			
Mother Euro. Am. —	IXP	12	<i>I've taught my daughter to cook a few simple meals and she's helping around the house much more.</i>
Children learn new skills.			
Non-binary Euro. Am. 4-year college	TsB	15, 18	<i>.... I'm not teaching them to cook or bake, but they ARE learning those things more during this time.</i>
Mother Euro. Am. Post-graduate	Dod	10, 13	<i>They are learning to do laundry, cook, take out garbage, unload the dishwasher.</i>
Parent teaches child subsistence skills. Parents want or need more help.			
Mother Euro. Am. Community college	6XD	13, 17, 22, 24, 26, 29, 35, 38	<i>I have to do more with her homeschooling than I'm used to. I am working harder on teaching her to make her own meals (lunch) and fold her own laundry, and help with picking up around the house.</i>
Parents want their children to be more independent. COVID rationale.			
Mother Euro. Am. Post-graduate	Vc1	13	<i>.... Asking him to clean his room for hygiene reasons (i.e., remove dirty dishes, and put them in the dishwasher, keep his bathroom clean). Asked him to keep me updated on foods he likes and whether we are out of them so I can add them to the weekly grocery list. Ask him to make his own breakfast and lunch.</i>
Children learn new skills.			
Mother Euro. Am. Community college	K9P	2, 12	<i>My 12 year old has been learning how to cook small meals for himself. I have had to be way more involved with his schooling because he is home full time</i>

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Table 1 (continued)

Parent Ethnicity Education	ID	Age of Child(ren)	Response
Parent teaches child subsistence skills. Extension of prior responsibilities. Encouragement of helpfulness.			
Mother Euro. Am. —	n6x	7, 9, 12 Our kids have always done chores but perhaps more frequently now. We have always encouraged them to be helpful in the kitchen and teach appropriate cooking/baking techniques so this has continued. They are now helping more with setting the table and cleaning up after dinner,
Parents want or need more help.			
Mother Euro. Am. —	MMA	3, 5, 7	We don't have cleaners coming to our home anymore so the onus is on our kids to clean their rooms more so than before.
Mother Euro. Am. Post-graduate	A6N	14	We do not have our cleaning person coming and I am somewhat disabled. My teenager is therefore now expected to pick up some of the slack, as are we all.
Child helps family.			
Mother — —	zxn	7, 10	We are all cooking more. (Everyone in the house is helping the 7 year old).
Parents want or need more help. Child helps family. Child wants to help parents by being more independent.			
Mother Euro. Am. —	kcG	17, 32	My son is 17 and taking this as an opportunity to prepare for being on his own in college. He helps out because he wants to lessen the burden on my husband and I who are working/teaching from home.
Parents want or need more help. Children learn new skills. Obligation rather than choice to help.			
Mother Euro. Am. 4-year college	35A	14, 17, 21 I instituted kitchen hours so that cleaning would be easier for me and I require their help after meals. They are learning new kitchen skills and are required to take charge of a meal once a week.
Difficult transition.			
Mother Euro. Am. 4-year college	Any	15, 19, 21	Expect more of their help but I don't get it.
Cooperation.			
Mother Euro. Am. —	lkv	12, 14 we are cooking quite regularly together.
Difficult transition. Cooperation.			
Mother Euro. Am. —	gXv	12, 13	... We tried to wing it at first, but with a 12 and 13 year old, this resulted in many arguments. As a result, we have a daily schedule now for things like empty dishwasher, vacuum, cleanup after dinner, empty garbage and recycling, feed the pets, etc. Sundays we do a big house clean, and we all help with laundry and change our sheets once per week.
Parents want children to be more independent.			
Mother Euro. Am. —	IGO	8, 10 Also now I am having my kids make their own lunch as much as possible.
Mother Euro. Am. —	U0T	18	My daughter needs to be more independent since I am working from home.
Obligation rather than choice to help.			
Mother Euro. Am. —	KFa	16, 20	Cooking and cleaning have always been encouraged; now it is required.

(continued on next page)

Table 1 (continued)

Parent Ethnicity Education	ID	Age of Child(ren)	Response
Extension of prior responsibilities.			
Mother Euro. Am. —	I5x	18, 21	They cook and clean way more than they used to. They have always been responsible for their own laundry and rooms since they were pre-teens.
Adapting to the pandemic, new normal.			
Father Euro. Am. Post-graduate	foU	18, 20, 22	It has just happened as a natural consequence of us being isolated in the same house constantly. It has not happened by design or desire, it's just the new normal for however long this lasts.

Note: The responses are full and direct transcriptions from portions of responses that were relevant to coding decisions. Four dots indicate where an irrelevant sentence or sentences of the response have been deleted. Three dots indicate where irrelevant words have been deleted. Spelling and grammatical errors transcribe those made by the participants. Square brackets enclose a researcher clarification. Ethnicity abbreviations are as follows:

European American > Euro. Am.

African American > African Am.

Asian American > Asian Am.

Native American > Native Am.

“Other” indicates that the respondent did not consider themselves European American, African American, Native American, LatinX, or Pacific Islander.

Post-graduate means any education beyond a four-year college degree.

Missing ethnicity or education information is indicated with dashes in the left-hand column of the table.

The distribution of the sixteen themes by which parents explained increased expectations is shown in Fig. 1. Recall that responses can include more than one theme, so theme frequency totals to more than 45, the number of participants who provided relevant qualitative data. Following the order in the figure, each theme is presented and discussed in the text. Whereas in Table 1 the parent respondent is the unit of analysis, in Fig. 1, the theme is the unit of analysis. Although we had disproportionately few minority parents in our qualitative sample, we note that the same theme, children have more time, was most frequent among both European American parents and parents from other ethnic groups.

work was significantly lighter than in-person. For example, a mother states, “...they have more time to fill their days, and school is at home and household duties are an element missing from their education but very practical, and it’s nice to take advantage from the daily grind to pick up a new skill...”

3.1.2. More time to teach children life (subsistence) skills (5 mentions)

Along with school closures, many jobs transitioned into remote working. Commute time was no longer an issue for many parents, a situation that meant they had more free time; remote working meant

Theme Frequency for Increased Expectations

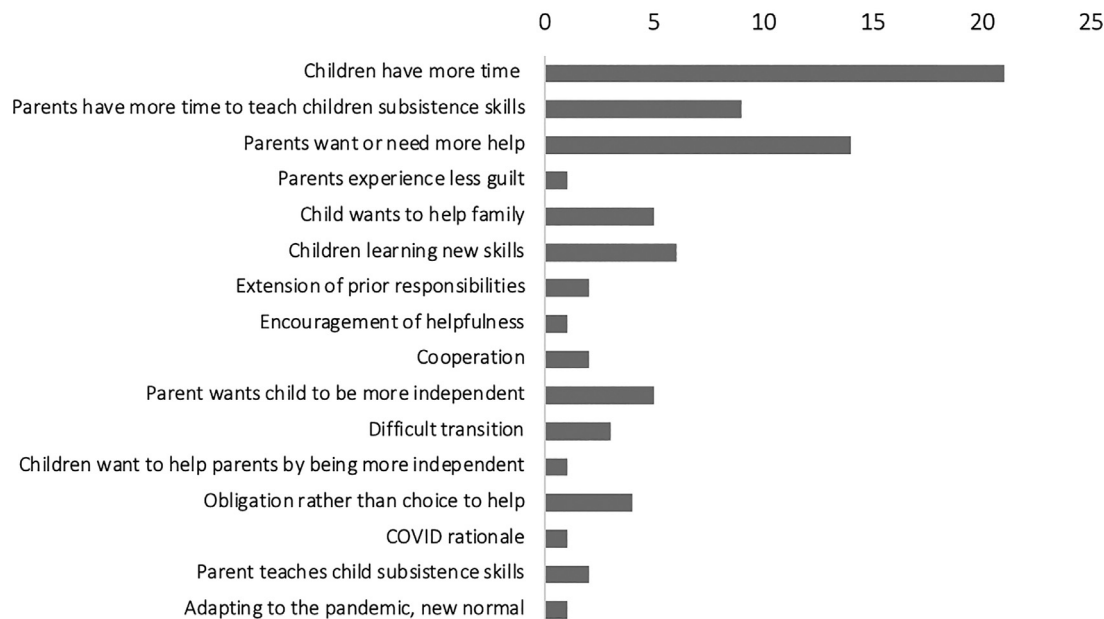


Fig. 1. Frequencies of themes used to explain increased expectations for children to help with household tasks.

3.1.1. Children have more time (20 mentions)

With school closures due to stay-at-home orders, children stayed home for online classes. Multiple parents responded that online course-

that they spent more time at home. This situation may have provided an opportunity for parents to teach their children skills they otherwise would not have had the time to teach. Many of these skills were impor-

tant family contributions in a subsistence ecology, including cooking, baking, cleaning, or garden work. One mother explains, “I am a full-time working mom, but I now have more time at home to teach them to cook and bake.”

3.1.3. Parents want or need more help (15 mentions)

While work and school became remote during stay-at-home orders, many parents' schedules became busier since they had to both help their children with online courses and take care of them. With less available time to perform household duties, there was an increased need for children to help with subsistence activities. One mother writes, “I have to do more with her homeschooling than I'm used to. I am working harder on teaching her to make her own meals (lunch) and fold her own laundry, and help with picking up around the house.”

Many parents also had to combine expanded home duties with remote work. An early hypothesis, with cross-cultural support, is that children's chores are associated with mothers' workloads (Whiting and Whiting 1975)—i.e., the heavier their workload, the more mothers expect help from their children. Within the group of 14 parents who mentioned needing more help, 10 mentioned increased workload as a reason for needing more household help; all were mothers. Eight of the ten parents mentioned household work (e.g., Mother ZTD: *Because there is more workload in regards to cooking...*). Two parents mentioned their occupational work; and one of the two mentioned increased workload of both mother and father (Mother 9hD: *My husband and I are still working (both physicians) so our daughter makes some dinners for us.*).

3.1.4. Less guilt for taking children away from schoolwork (1 mention)

One mother mentioned that she no longer experienced as much guilt from asking her children to help with household chores. The strength of the pedagogical model (LeVine et al., 1994) before the pandemic encouraged competition and an emphasis on schoolwork. Consequently, parents felt like they needed to perform all the subsistence activities so that their children could focus on thriving in a competitive environment. With the increased survival threat during the pandemic and less schoolwork given online, this mother no longer felt the pressure to take on all household duties. She states, “Since they have more time on their hands, I don't feel guilty asking them to do more around the house (Cooking and cleaning) Normally I would be expecting them to do homework or other projects, but they are finishing their school work within the normal hours of the school day (at home).”

3.1.5. Children help family (5 mentions)

In the case of an older teenager, the child took the initiative to help his family. Perhaps with children having more time available and parents having less time available, it made logical sense to a mature teenager to initiate help. Thus, a mother writes “My son is 17 ... He helps out because he wants to lessen the burden on my husband and I who are working/teaching from home.” In other cases, parent expectations play a larger role or the role of child initiative is unclear.

3.1.6. Children learn new skills (6 mentions)

Differing from parents teaching children subsistence skills, almost all of these children are learning how to cook, bake, clean, or do laundry on their own. In the most clearcut case of independent learning, a parent writes, “I'm not teaching them to cook or bake, but they ARE learning those things more during this time.”

3.1.7. Extension of prior responsibilities (2 mentions)

These children are simply asked to perform more than what they were previously asked to do. A mother writes, “They cook and clean way more than they used to. They have always been responsible for their own laundry and rooms since they were pre-teens.”

3.1.8. Encouragement of helpfulness (1 mention)

This parent wants to encourage their child to be helpful, a fundamental subsistence value. The mother writes, “We have always encouraged

them to be helpful in the kitchen and teach appropriate cooking/baking techniques so this has continued.”

3.1.9. Cooperation (2 mentions)

These parents work cooperatively with their children, a significant subsistence practice. One mother writes, “We are cooking quite regularly together.”

3.1.10. Parents want children to be more independent (4 mentions)

As parents take on more roles and responsibilities during the pandemic, they have less time to watch over their children, leading to encouragement or desire for their children to become more independent. By having their children become more independent, parents will have fewer responsibilities such as worrying about meals and hygiene. A mother writes, “My daughter needs to be more independent since I am working from home.”

3.1.11. Difficult transition (3 mentions)

Naturally, with stay-at-home orders, conflicts between parents and their children could become more prevalent on how to allocate household duties. Three parents expressed frustration in having a hard time trying to get their children to cooperate. A mother writes, “Expect more of their help but I don't get it.” Nonetheless, note that resistance on the part of the children to increased expectations for household contributions is quite infrequent in the sample – mentioned by only 3 out of 42 parents, or less than 10%.

3.1.12. Child wants to help parents by being more independent (1 mention)

Unlike parents who want their children to be more independent, this son is the one taking the initiative to be independent. The parent does not mention any desire for their son to be more independent. The mother writes, “My son is 17 and taking this as an opportunity to prepare for being on his own in college. He helps out because he wants to lessen the burden on my husband and I who are working/teaching from home.”

3.1.13. Obligation rather than choice to help (4 mentions)

Closely related to parents needing and wanting more help, these parents have made it a requirement for their children to help with household duties. One mother writes, “Cooking and cleaning have always been encouraged; now it is required.”

3.1.14. COVID rationale (1 mention)

This parent wants their child to maintain good hygiene, which is a good preventative measure for COVID-19. The mother writes, “Asking him to clean his room for hygiene reasons (i.e., remove dirty dishes, and put them in the dishwasher, keep his bathroom clean).”

3.1.15. Parents teach children subsistence skills (4 mentions)

Similar to what might be observed in subsistence ecologies (Greenfield et al., 2019), one mother writes, “I've taught my daughter to cook a few simple meals and she's helping around the house much more.”

3.1.16. Adapting to the pandemic/ new normal (1 mention)

This parent expresses that any changes in their expectations are simply a natural consequence of adapting to the pandemic. The father writes, “It has just happened as a natural consequence of us being isolated in the same house constantly. It has not happened by design or desire, it's just the new normal for however long this lasts.”

3.2. Unchanged expectations: themes and frequency

Table 2 presents the three qualitative responses and the theme or combination of themes that they expressed justifying no change in expectations for children's responsibilities during the pandemic. Like Table 1, this table not only shows every parent's response; it also shows how parents combined different themes.

Table 2
Parents' Reasons for Unchanged Expectations Concerning Children's Contributions to Family Maintenance or Self Maintenance During the Pandemic.

Parent Ethnicity Education	ID	Age of Child(ren)	Response
Children were already homeschooled.			
Mother Other —	trX	8	<i>We were homeschooling homebodies before the coronavirus hit, so nothing has really changed for us.</i>
Children were already homeschooled. Children already met high expectations before pandemic.			
Mother Euro. Am. 4-year College	VPK	13	<i>I have always homeschooled and my children were already aware of their responsibilities.</i>
Children were already homeschooled. Children already met high expectations before pandemic. Trying to maintain normalcy.			
Mother Other —	NW8	15, 18	<i>There are no changes to note. My children are involved as is appropriate to ask. They cook, clean, keep their rooms clean, do laundry and have been doing so for years. Yes, I would like them to step up a bit more. But really, they are 15 and 18. They are in the middle of a very unsettled time and their future is very uncertain. Oh yeah, I homeschool the 15 year old.</i>

Note: The responses are full and direct transcriptions from portions of responses that were relevant to coding decisions. Four dots indicate where an irrelevant sentence or sentences of the response have been deleted. Three dots indicate where irrelevant words have been deleted. Spelling and grammatical errors transcribe those made by the participants. Ethnicity abbreviations are as follows:
 European American > Euro. Am.
 African American > African Am.
 Asian American > Asian Am.
 Native American > Native Am.
 "Other" indicates that the respondent did not consider themselves European American, African American, Native American, LatinX, or Pacific Islander.
 Post-graduate means any education beyond a four-year college degree.
 Missing ethnicity or education information is indicated with a dash in the left-hand column of the table.

Fig. 2 shows the frequency of the different themes justifying unchanged expectations. Again, participants often combined themes, so the number of themes is greater than the number of participants expressing unchanged expectations.

3.2.1. Already homeschooled (3)

Forty parents responded to the quantitative questions that their expectations for their children to help with family household tasks re-

Theme Frequency for Unchanged Expectations

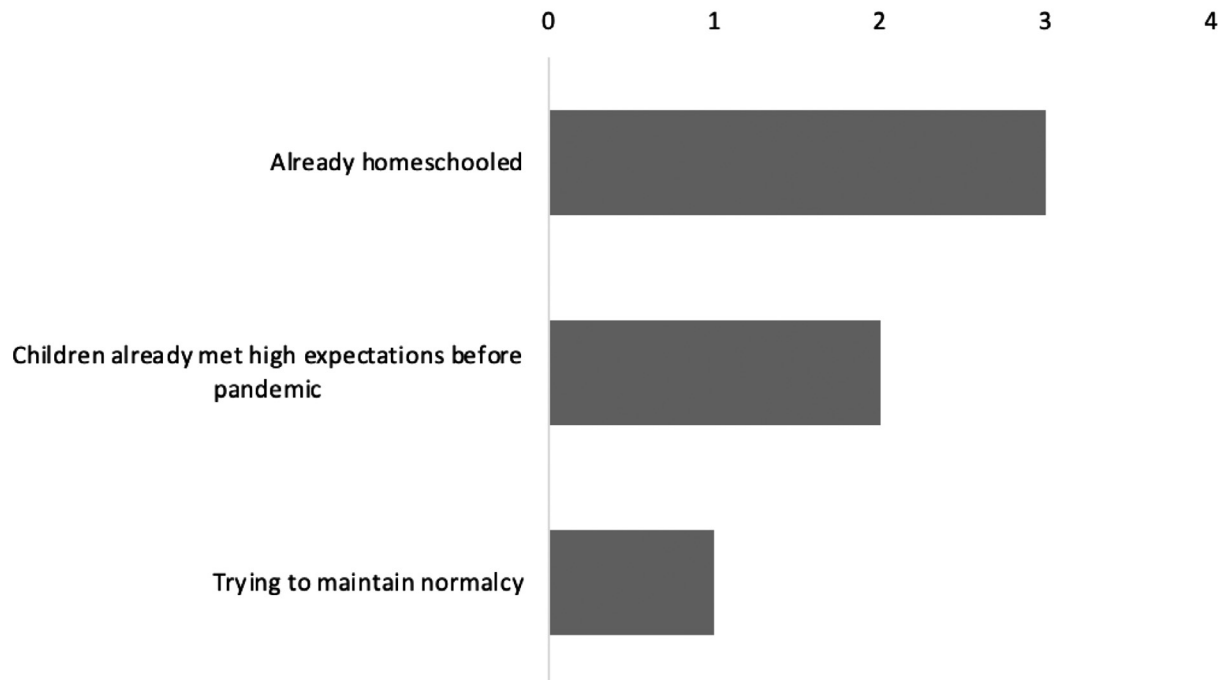


Fig. 2. Frequencies of themes used to explain unchanged expectations for children to help with household tasks.

mained unchanged. The most common theme, based on 3 qualitative responders, was that their children were already homeschooled before the pandemic, so their schedules had not changed (Fig. 2). Considering that these families already had familistic values, it is unsurprising that the shift due to the pandemic did not affect them. A mother writes, “We were homeschooling homebodies before the coronavirus hit, so nothing has really changed for us.”

3.2.2. Children already met high expectations before the pandemic (2)

Since children already performed a decent amount of household chores, it is normal that parents did not see a need for change during the pandemic. A mother explains, “My children are involved as is appropriate to ask. They cook, clean, keep their rooms clean, do laundry and have been doing so for years.”

3.2.3. Trying to maintain normalcy (1)

The same mother who provided the prior example discussed wanting to keep life as normal as before the pandemic. She believed that maintaining the same amount of household work for her children would help their well-being. The mother writes, “Yes, I would like them to step up a bit more. But really, they are 15 and 18. They are in the middle of a very unsettled time and their future is very uncertain.”

3.3. Satisfaction with life and future prospects

The COVID-19 pandemic has shifted parents’ and children’s lives but a larger question remains: Will the parenting shifts identified in both quantitative (Greenfield et al., 2021) and the present qualitative analysis last? To approach this question, we used our survey data to explore the affective concomitants of parenting shifts during the pandemic. Our focus was on whether parents felt that their life satisfaction had increased, decreased, or stayed the same during the pandemic. The rationale was that the dominant response and the supporting rationales would provide clues about the future of these changes. We then discuss the implications of our findings for the future in the Discussion section.

Out of the 45 parents in our qualitative sample, the largest group (23) had experienced a decline in life satisfaction. Twelve had experienced an increase in life satisfaction; and 10 parents had experienced no change.

Of the 23 parents who experienced a decline in life satisfaction, 5 mentioned children in their open-ended responses. Here are excerpts from three participants who related parenting and children to their decline in life satisfaction:

- I Mother Tjl:*Kids draining*
- II Mother 9sn: *My kids were happier because they were happily interacting with their friends. My daughter was excited about visiting college campuses, going to prom, and maybe getting a job or internship. So, I have teenagers I've grown somewhat closer to, so that's neat, but they're bummed that they're missing out on neat life experiences. And I'm bummed for them. It sucks!*
- III Mother tsB: *I am able to do less for my kids towards helping them find their way to a happy adulthood.*

Two of the 12 parents who found life during COVID more satisfying mentioned children. Here is what they said:

- I Mother Nsv: *I have always wanted to stay at home with my kids and now I can do that even though I am still working from home.*
- II Mother lkv: *All the non important stuff died: no need to drive the kids to abs [and] from school, all the afternoon activities for the kids are canceled. No evening meeting for the parents at school. It is liberating!*

4. Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic gave rise to a cultural shift in U.S. household practices; parents adapted by expecting their children to participate

more in household maintenance (Greenfield et al., 2021). Although the environment in which this shift took place was radically different from that of a small agricultural village, parents’ reasons contain reflections of the ecology of childhood in subsistence villages (B.B. Whiting, 1996). However, we are not asserting that this adaptation is a carbon copy of a village; we are simply identifying the directionality of the shifts.

Additionally, we are not claiming that mothers in small villages would expect their children to participate in chores simply because they have more free time. Instead, we are describing responses to material conditions in both subsistence ecologies and the pandemic in the United States. If children are not going to school in relatively isolated subsistence villages (their material condition), then they have more time to perform household chores.

Since children were spending more time at home, as they do in agricultural villages (Greenfield et al., 2009), parents articulated that they had their children observe and help them with subsistence chores, consequently teaching them these skills (Greenfield, 2004; Greenfield et al., 2019). Interestingly, the unchanged expectations were mainly among parents who were already homeschooling their children when the pandemic began. Their responses solidify the connection between children learning at home and children helping with household maintenance, a connection that is also found in the naturally occurring ecologies of subsistence villages.

Parents also articulated that they needed more help; their reason was that an entire family at home all day created more of a mess and necessitated way more meal preparation. Workload increases stemming from homeschooling and responsibilities at work were also mentioned by mothers. These mentions bring to mind the dynamic found by anthropologists working in subsistence ecologies: Expectations for children’s contributions to family maintenance increase as mothers workloads increase (e.g., Munroe et al., 1984). The drastic change for children to have school at home and parents to start working from home likely added even more stress since they likely had to deal with technology issues – such as not being able to afford high-speed internet or not having a computer for each family member working or learning from home. For all these reasons, it was functional for children to acquire and parents to teach skills in the areas of home maintenance, laundry, and cooking.

Shifting in the direction of practices found in small, isolated villages, developing children’s subsistence skills spontaneously followed the apprenticeship model of informal education, where learning takes place in the course of everyday life, often at home, under the guidance of older family members. This model contrasts with formal education where education takes place in the specialized setting of the school under the guidance of professionally trained teachers (Greenfield et al., 2003; Greenfield and Lave, 1979/1982). Children contributed to family maintenance as an adaptation to changes in their everyday ecology.

As survival threats rose in the outside world and kept people at home together, it created an ecological and social shift such that parents adapted by spending more time teaching their children subsistence skills. One parent implied the concept of adaptation by describing the increase in parent expectations for help around the house as a “natural consequence” of the shifts in home ecology and called these shifts “the new normal.” Contrary to the individualistic focus on choice rather than obligation (Greenfield, 2013), some parents shifted from encouraging their children to help to requiring them to do so, a common practice in less resourced ecologies (Raef et al., 2000; Greenfield and Quiroz, 2013).

In some cases, this shift was not difficult, as children themselves also changed. Some parents expressed that their children developed more intrinsic motivation to contribute to their families, another characteristic of child development in subsistence village ecologies (Whiting and Whiting, 1975). In such ecologies, children are judged on taking the initiative to help with household chores (Blanco and Chodorow, 1964; Dasen, 1984). Indeed, taking responsibility to help the family in mul-

tipic concrete ways characterizes children's role and motivation in a subsistence ecology where education occurs primarily in family contexts (Coppens et al., 2014; Dasen, 1984; Nsamenang and Lamb, 1994; Nsamenang, 2006; Ogunaike and Houser, 2002; Weisner, 1996; Whiting and Whiting, 1975). Since the learning environment shifted towards apprenticeship learning at home in the context of survival threat and household isolation, family behavior adapted to the ecology. Parents expressed that their children began acting more autonomously when carrying out household chores. Having fewer extracurricular activities to engage in, children's behavior in the learning environment became more centered on helping the family.

With children having more time at home and sharing more activities with their parents, these in-person social activities can foster community and family values (Greenfield, 2016). With parents around their children more, they have more opportunities to teach their own values to their children (Manago, 2012). Their children in turn have less opportunity to be influenced by friends or teachers. This constitutes a cultural shift in the familistic direction.

An interesting and unexpected theme that appeared was reduced guilt for asking children to help with household duties during the pandemic. Although only one parent made this theme explicit, it was implicit in several other responses. One explanation for this may be that the previous individualistic mindset encouraged parents to raise their children for a competitive, commercial society. This meant children were asked to focus on schoolwork and extracurricular activities while the parents performed all or most household duties (e.g., Park et al., 2020; Bian et al., 2022). With the pandemic and less assigned schoolwork, there was a shift in values where parents felt like they could ask their children for help with chores without feeling that chores were occupying time their children didn't have and possibly hindering their children's future success.

However, these shifts were not always smooth sailing for children whose upbringing had taken place in an individualistic cultural context up to the pandemic. Several parents expressed frustration about wanting help from their children but not receiving it. Some parents were able to effectively integrate what children were used to - individualistic parenting - with expectations for family contributions induced by the pandemic. These parents focused on children increasing their self-care skills to develop the child's independence, an individualistic goal; but that goal simultaneously created less work for the parents, a familistic effect. One parent wanted their child to maintain good hygiene, to prevent them from falling ill with COVID, an individualistic goal with implications for others.

Our findings concerning the mixed parental responses to these new adaptations make it very hard to predict a general trend for the future. It may be that parents who enjoyed the increased time and closeness with their children will try to retain some of their new practices, whereas those who felt the social activity limitations of COVID stay-at-home orders will not. Regardless, the shifts in parenting expectations were adaptations to conditions of increased survival threat and retraction of the social world to the family household. As these conditions change, adaptive parenting behavior will also change. Many children have developed new subsistence skills in the areas of cooking, household maintenance, and self-maintenance (Greenfield et al., 2021). We believe these valuable life skills will not be lost, but will persist over time.

5. Limitations and future directions

One limitation is that we did not ask parents the gender of each child. A gendered division of labor is an important component of subsistence ecologies (Manago et al., 2014) and cross-cultural research suggests that girls are usually given more domestic chores than boys (e.g., B.B. Whiting, 1963; Whiting and Whiting, 1975; Munroe et al., 1984; Seymour 1988, 1999). However, our survey questions yielded information on each family configuration in terms of age only; we do not have systematic information on either the gender configuration of the fami-

lies or on which chores were done by which children in the household. Therefore, the gendering of children's household responsibilities is not an issue we could address. Another limitation is that our sample is much more ethnically homogenous than California as a whole. Our qualitative parent sample consisted of 91.1% mothers, so a gender analysis of parenting was not possible. Consequently, our study cannot shed light on the role of gender or ethnic group membership.

Further research could be conducted to explore the effects of schools balancing teaching academic skills with life skills such as cooking, sewing, and gardening. Additionally, it would be interesting to see the extent to which this rapid shift in parent expectations affects children later in life. Finally, quantitative research concerning the emotional impact of the lockdown on parents would provide generality to the findings in this qualitative study. Such research could also explore the long-term emotional impact of the pandemic on parent-child relations.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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